

Get Organized

When possible, reach out to existing groups which may have similar goals or represent the same community. The B-CC Regional Services Center can help identify groups in your area.

These groups can offer the opportunity for a range of partnerships through their existing structure and resources. You may be the “shot in the arm” that helps a struggling or dormant organization become more relevant and responsive to the needs of its membership.

If there are no existing community organizations or you decide to form a group more closely tailored to your specific goals, begin by identifying two or three others willing to join an “organization committee.”

The organization committee can help with:

- Selecting an interim group leader;
- Suggesting topics for agenda/goals of the organization;
- Establishing a place and time for meetings such as a centrally located home, community center, or school and a time during the week that works best, usually after dinner; and
- Setting tentative geographic boundaries and a name for your organization.

Set Goals

All organizations must carefully and clearly define their goals. A list of goals is a simple, but important, statement of the organization’s purpose. Goals should be specific, measurable, realistic, tangible and, most importantly, achievable. Remember to keep initial goals flexible enough to change as your membership grows.

Goals for a community association may include:

- Helping individuals get to know each other by holding social events.
- Organizing issue or educational workshops.
- Advocating for a local ordinance or project.
- Improving the community through neighborhood clean-up days and volunteer activities.
- Raising funds for a community project.
- Forming a Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime.

Spread the Word

Nothing gets the word out better than personal contact. In years past some community associations were defined by the area an organizer could walk on a weekend afternoon.

Tried and true techniques for getting the word out include:

- Distributing flyers;
- Talking to neighbors one-on-one, and if possible, informally survey them about wants, needs, and concerns;
- Posting signs at key exits to the neighborhood and at activity centers; and
- Identifying other prospective leaders and getting them involved.

Your First Meeting

The purpose of the first meeting is to introduce the fledgling association to your neighbors. The format should motivate the community not just to attend, but to encourage continued involvement.

Some ideas for a first meeting include:

- ***Invite a well known speaker.*** Local elected or appointed officials are always good choices. Other speakers could include a local author or a media personality.
- ***Provide food.*** A summer cookout is a family-friendly option. Choose a nearby park, or at mid-block.
- ***Discuss a current problem.*** Nothing motivates better than crisis. Make sure that you've invited partners likely to help you resolve the problem.

First Meeting Do's and Don'ts

- **DO provide name-tags to help new residents get to know each other**
- **DO keep the agenda light and focused on relationship building**
- **DO focus on identifying issues of concern**
- **DO ask for volunteers to research issues and report back**
- **DO emphasize the value of organization vs. individual action**
- **DON'T forget to offer food and provide a pleasant atmosphere**
- **DON'T cast the meeting as a debate or vote on particular solutions.**
- **DON'T get bogged down in conflicts between individuals.**